

Austria Country Specific Information

March 12, 2013

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Austria is a highly developed, stable democracy with a modern economy. Tourism is an important pillar of the Austrian economy and facilities are widely available. Read the Department of State Fact Sheet [on Austria](#) for additional information on the U.S.-Austria relationship, or see the information at the [Austrian National Tourist Office](#).

SMART TRAVELER ENROLLMENT PROGRAM (STEP): If you are going to live in or visit Austria, please take the time to tell our Embassy about your trip via the [Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). If you enroll, we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. It will also help your friends and family get in touch with you in an emergency.

EMBASSY LOCATION:

[U.S. Embassy in Vienna, Consular Section](#)

Parking 12a

Telephone: 43- 1-31339-7535

After hours: 43-1-31339

Facsimile: 43-1-512 58 35

E-mail: ConsulateVienna@state.gov

ENTRY / EXIT REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. CITIZENS: Austria is a party to the Schengen Agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter the Schengen area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport used should be valid at least for the period of the intended stay (usually the date of the return flight). For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our [Schengen Fact Sheet](#).

Anyone intending to stay longer than 90 days must obtain the appropriate visa issued by the Austrian Embassy in the United States. It is important that students attending or hoping to attend a college/university in Austria (regardless of whether the intended period of stay is less or more than six months) should consult with the Austrian Embassy/Consulate **before going to Austria**. Information for students is available from the [Austrian agency for international mobility and cooperation in education, science and research](#) (OeAD).

For visa holders entering Austria, the passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of intended stay. Visit the [Embassy of Austria](#) website for the most current visa information. There are four Austrian Consulates General in the United States; please contact the appropriate office for assistance. If you reside outside the United States, please contact the Austrian Embassy or Consulate in your country of residence. Here is a list of [Austrian Embassies and Consulates](#).

There are no vaccination requirements for international travelers. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Austria.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the prevention of [international child abduction](#) can be found on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information](#) page.

THREATS TO SAFETY AND SECURITY: Austria remains largely free of terrorist incidents; however, like other countries in the Schengen area, Austria's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering and exiting the country with anonymity. U.S. citizens are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

Austrian intelligence experts have registered increased radicalization of immigrant Muslim individuals and of small conspiratorial groups, as well as intensified use of the Internet as a propaganda and communications platform. Every year, a number of avalanche deaths occur in Austria's alpine regions. Many occur when skiers/snowboarders stray from designated ski slopes. Leaving designated slopes to ski off-piste may pose serious risks and may delay rescue attempts in case of emergency. Skiers and snowboarders should monitor weather and terrain conditions, and use available avalanche rescue equipment. Avalanche beepers (transceivers) are the most common rescue devices and, when properly used, provide the fastest way of locating an avalanche victim, usually enabling authorities to begin rescue operations within minutes.

Stay up-to-date by:

- Bookmarking our [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), which contains the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#) ;
- Following us on [Twitter](#) and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on [Facebook](#) as well;
- Downloading our free [Smart Traveler App](#), available through [iTunes](#) and the [Android market](#), to have travel information at your fingertips;
- Calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the U.S. and Canada, or a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries; and
- Taking some time before travel to consider your personal security. Here are some useful tips for [traveling safely abroad](#).

CRIME: Austria has one of the lowest crime rates in Europe, and violent crime is rare. However, crimes involving theft of personal property do occur. As such, most crimes involving U.S. citizens are crimes of opportunity, involving theft of personal belongings. Travelers are also targets of pick-pockets who operate where tourists tend to gather. Some of the spots where such crimes are most frequently reported include Vienna's two largest train stations, the plaza around St. Stephen's Cathedral, and the nearby pedestrian shopping areas (in Vienna's First District).

The U.S. Embassy receives reports of theft and pick-pocketing on public transportation lines, especially on those lines coming into and out from the city center. Secure your personal belongings and always take precautions while on public transportation and in public places such as cafes and tourist areas.

Don't buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal to bring back into the United States, by buying them, you may also be breaking local law.

VICTIMS OF CRIME: If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police. If you are the victim of a crime, you can contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. We can:

- Replace a stolen passport;
- Help you find appropriate medical care for violent crimes such as assault or rape;
- Put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities;
- Contact family members or friends, with your permission;
- Help you understand the local criminal justice process and can direct you to local attorneys, although it is important to remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crime.

Please see our [information on victims of crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States. Specific information on the Austrian crime victim compensation program can be found on the [U.S. Embassy's website](#).

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Austria is "133."

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While traveling in Austria, you are subject to its laws. While you are overseas, U.S. laws do not apply, and if you do something illegal in your host country, your U.S. passport won't help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It is very important to know what is legal and what is not, since foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. Criminal penalties also vary from country to country. There are also some things that may be legal where you

are traveling but illegal in the United States. If you engage in sexual conduct with children or use or disseminate child pornography in a foreign country, you can be [prosecuted in the United States](#).

Persons violating Austrian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking illegal drugs in Austria are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Arrest Notifications: Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, bilateral agreements with certain countries, and customary international law, if you are arrested in Austria, you have the option to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the U.S. Embassy of your arrest, and to have communications from you forwarded to the Embassy.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: You may have ATM problems with a U.S.-issued debit card. If your request for cash is rejected, check your accounts immediately to see whether the money was in fact debited. If this is the case, notify your banking institution immediately. Prompt action may result in a refund of the debited amount. Keep your receipts.

ACCESSIBILITY: While in Austria, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what you find in the United States. Austrian federal law mandates access to public buildings for persons with physical disabilities; as a result, accessibility has substantially improved in recent years. While many stores and restaurants in Austria frequently lack ramp or elevator access, most tourist attractions are accessible. A comprehensive assessment of public buildings, including tourist sites, restaurants, cafes, and hotels in Vienna, is available at the [Vienna Tourist Information](#) website.

Vienna Transportation:

- **Streetcars:** Vienna's streetcar fleet is phasing in newer trains that are easily accessible for those who use wheelchairs. Approximately one-third of the fleet has been upgraded, although older trains with stair-like entrances are still quite common.
- **Buses:** Public buses in Vienna are equipped with a "kneeling" capability, to permit easier passenger boarding. The center of each bus has generous space and is equipped with tether lines.
- **Subway stations:** All subway stations in Austria have elevator access, although not at every entrance. Stations are also equipped with a ridged/raised surface to help guide sight-impaired passengers from the entrance to the platform.
- **Crosswalks:** Motorists in Vienna are quite observant of local law and usually yield to pedestrians waiting to cross in designated "zebra" crosswalks. Major intersections also offer an audible cue for the sight-impaired to cross.
- **Guide dogs:** Austria is a very dog-friendly country and dogs are welcome in almost every venue, including taxis, public transportation, stores, and most restaurants. In addition,

guide dogs are also permitted in normally restricted venues, such as major tourist attractions.

For information regarding accessibility in other regions of Austria, please visit the Austrian national Council of Disabled Persons [website](#), which dedicates an entire section to this topic.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: There are an adequate number of hospitals available in Austria. **Local hospitals will not settle their accounts directly with American insurance companies.** You must pay the bill to the local hospital and later claim a refund from the insurance carrier in the United States. Medicare payments are not available outside the United States.

The Austrian Medicine Import Act generally prohibits the import of prescription drugs into Austria, with two exceptions:

- Travelers residing outside the European Union are allowed to carry with them (as part of their personal luggage) drugs and medicines, but only a quantity the individual requires during the course of the stay; and,
- Travelers, while staying in Austria, may receive drugs and medicines for their personal use by mail. The quantity is limited to the length of their stay in Austria and must never exceed three packages.

We recommend you have either a prescription or written statement from your personal physician that you are under a doctor's care and that the medicine is necessary for your physical well-being while traveling.

Public health in Austria is excellent. Community sanitation in Vienna meets or exceeds that of most U.S. cities. Disease incidence and type are similar to the rest of Europe and the United States. At the present time, air pollution is not a major health problem in Vienna.

You can find information on vaccinations and other health precautions on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) [website](#). For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) website](#), which also contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#).

MEDICAL INSURANCE: You can't assume your insurance will go with you when you travel. It's very important to find out BEFORE you leave whether or not your medical insurance will cover you overseas. You need to ask your insurance company two questions:

- Does my policy apply when I'm out of the United States?

- Will it cover emergencies like a trip to a foreign hospital or a medical evacuation?

In many places, doctors and hospitals still expect payment in cash at the time of service. Your regular U.S. health insurance may not cover doctor and hospital visits in other countries. If your policy doesn't go with you when you travel, it's a very good idea to take out another one for your trip. For more information, please see our [medical insurance overseas page](#).

Any person, regardless of citizenship, who wants to take up residence in Austria, must be covered by some health insurance plan that covers full medical treatment in Austria. U.S. citizens interested in joining the [health insurance plan under the Austrian system](#) should apply to the Health Insurance Agency (Gebietskrankenkasse) in the province (Bundesland) where they reside. Applicants for short-term visas require travel insurance; a list of insurance carriers is available [here](#).

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in Austria, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. Road conditions in Austria are generally excellent. During the winter, however, roads in alpine areas may become dangerous due to snowfall, ice, or avalanches. Some mountain roads may be closed for extended periods and tire chains are often required. Be extra careful during the heavily traveled vacation periods (i.e., December-February, Easter, and July-August). Be alert when you drive through autobahn construction zones, particularly on the A-1 East/West Autobahn. Reduced lanes and two-way traffic in these zones have resulted in several deadly accidents in recent years. Traffic information and road conditions are broadcast on the English-language channel, fm4, located between 91 and 105 FM depending on the locale.

A U.S. driver's license alone is not sufficient to drive in Austria. You must also get an [international driver's permit](#) (obtainable in the U.S. from the American Automobile Association and the American Automobile Touring Alliance) or by an official translation of the U.S. driver's license, which can be obtained at one of the Austrian automobile clubs (OEAMTC or ARBOE). This arrangement is only acceptable for the first six months of driving in Austria, after which all drivers must obtain an Austrian license.

Austria requires all vehicles using the autobahn to display an "Autobahn Vignette" highway-tax sticker on the inside of the vehicle's windshield. The sticker may be purchased at border crossings, gas stations in Austria, and small "Tabak" shops located in Austrian towns. Fines for failing to display a valid autobahn vignette on the windshield of your car are usually around \$150.

Austrian autobahns have a maximum speed limit of 130 km/hr, although drivers often drive much faster and pass aggressively. The use of hand-held cell phones while driving is prohibited. Turning right on red is also prohibited throughout Austria. The legal limit for blood alcohol content in Austria is .05 percent and penalties for driving under the influence tend to be stricter than in many U.S. states.

It is mandatory for cars on Austrian motorways and highways to leave an emergency corridor, even when no emergency vehicle is approaching. When traffic stops, create an emergency corridor in between the far-left lane and all others to the right; vehicles should also be using the shoulder. For more information, please click [here](#). Failure to comply carries a fine of about \$2,700.

Between November 1 and April 15, the use of winter tires is mandated by law. All-season tires comply if they carry the "M S" mark and have at least 4 mm of tread. In addition, local police may require snow chains in heavy snow. Failure to comply with the law results in a substantial fine and the suspension of the cited vehicle's use. Insurance is deemed void if a vehicle which is involved in an accident between November 1 and April 15 is not fitted with winter tires.

Tourists driving rented vehicles must ensure that the vehicle is equipped with the proper tires and pay close attention to the provisions of their rental contract. Many contracts prohibit drivers from taking rented vehicles into eastern European countries. Drivers attempting to enter countries listed as "prohibited" on the car rental contract may be arrested, fined, and/or charged with attempted auto theft. Austrian police are authorized to hold the rented vehicle for the car rental company.

Emergency roadside help and information may be reached by dialing 123 or 120 for vehicle assistance and towing services (Austrian automobile clubs), 122 for the fire department, 133 for police, and 144 for ambulance. The European emergency line is 112.

Austrian Federal Railroads (Österreichische Bundesbahnen) offer excellent railroad service to all major towns of the country and also direct connections with all major cities in Europe. Trains are well maintained and fares are reasonable. There is also an extensive network of bus lines operated by the Austrian Postal Service (Österreichische Post). All major cities also offer excellent public transportation services. For more information, please visit this [website](#).

Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information. Visit the website of [Austria's national tourist office](#) (Österreich Werbung) and the [national authority responsible for road safety](#) (Kuratorium für Verkehrssicherheit).

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Austria's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Austria's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the [FAA safety assessment page](#).

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: Please see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on [intercountry adoption](#) and [international parental child abduction](#).

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This replaces the Country Specific Information for Austria dated July 27, 2012.